

Narrowing the Research

When beginning research, the best place to start is a broad subject area of interest. To be successful in any research project, though, that broad subject must be sharpened into a much more narrow research question. By focusing on the five W's (who, what, where, when, why), a broad research subject can be narrowed into a workable research question.

Complete the activity below to practice creating a practical research question.

Exercise:

1. Read the title of the provided article. Using your prior knowledge, come up with any who, what, where, when, why questions that interest you about the article's subject. Place the questions in the chart below and check off that they are BEFORE questions; your goal is to come up with at least three questions before you read.
2. Read the article. Come up with additional, what, where, when, why questions that are interesting, add them to the chart, and check off that they are AFTER questions; your goal is to have at least one question per W.
3. For each question decide whether or not additional research (beyond the article) would be needed to answer the question.

W	QUESTION	BEFORE ✓	AFTER ✓	FURTHER RESEARCH? (Yes or No)
WHO				
WHAT				
WHERE				
WHEN				
WHY				
How				

4. Now, mix and match the questions that require additional research from the chart above to create one interesting research questions that addresses at least three of the five W elements. This is your narrowed, working research question:

REMEMBER: The research process is just that, a process. Your research question may evolve as begin to learn more about it.